Hamilton Field, Base Operations
(Facility No. 365, Hangar No. 7)
5th Street and Hangar Avenue
Novato
Marin County
California

HABS No. CA-2398-G

HABS
CAL
21-NOVA,
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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
San Francisco, California

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HAMILTON FIELD, Base Operations
(Facility No. 365, Hangar No. 7)

HABS No. CA-2398-G

Location: Hamilton Army Air Field
Novato, Marin County, California
Hangar 7 and Base Operations
Facility No. 365 (5th Street and Hangar Avenue)

U.S.G.S.: Novato, CA. Quadrangle (7.5' series), 1954 (revised 1980)
Petaluma Point, CA. Quadrangle (7.5' series), 1959 (revised 19B0)
UTM Coordinates: Zone 10; A: 542100/4213620; B: 544720/4212220;
C: 542760/4210650; D: 541040/4212600

Present Owner: General Services Administration, Washington, D. C.

Present Occupant: Vacant

Present Use: Vacant

Statement of Significance:

The Base Operations building and its hangar was the focal point of the air field architecture and was also one of the most important administration centers on base. During World War II, it served as the first headquarters for the Air Transport Command's Pacific Division stationed at Hamilton Army Air Field, one of three ATC headquarters in the west. Many of the delegates attending the first United Nations conference in San Francisco in 1945 passed through Hamilton and were welcomed at the base operations facility with much ceremony. This building is an example of the application of an important architectural trend (Spanish Colonial Revival) adapted to reflect California's Mission heritage in a departure from traditional military architecture.

See narrative for Hamilton Field (HABS No. CA-239B) for a comprehensive Statement of Significance and individual report HABS No. CA-239B-F for a condensed general Statement of Significance.

PART 1: HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of Erection: The contract for base operations was awarded on November 10, 1933, and construction on the base operations building was completed on November 21, 1934 (Hamilton Facility Cards 1933-1971).

2. Architect: Hamilton Field was designed under the guidance of Captain Howard B. Nurse, Construction Quartermaster. He was assisted by a corps of civilians headed by H. P. Spencer, Chief Architect, and F. W. Salfinger, Chief Engineer. Captain F. C. Petes and Lieutenant J. H. Veal of the Quartermaster's Corps were detailed to Marin County by the War Department to assist Nurse (*Novato Advance* May 28, 1932). Landscaping efforts were directed by C. C. Stevens, a local landscape engineer, using plantings chosen by Nurse and donated by Marin County citizens.

3. Original Owner: Hamilton Field is on land originally owned by private individuals and companies. In 1930, the California Packing Company sold 630 acres of land to Marin County to use to entice the Army to build on the site. An additional 161 acres were purchased from Dr. T. Peter and Julia Bodkin. These parcels were combined with other County-owned land, and in 1932 Marin County sold a 927-acre parcel of land to the Department of the Army for $1.00 for use by the Army Air Corps as an air field. In 1947 Hamilton Air Field was transferred to the newly-formed U. S. Air Force and renamed Hamilton Air Force Base. In 1974 the U. S. Congress declared the installation excess to military needs and closed the base (Maniery et al. 1993). The base operations building was transferred to the General Services Administration in 1974.

4. Builder, Contractor, Supplier: The base operation hangar was constructed by the Robert E. McKee Company for a total cost of $159,506.31.

5. Original Plans and Construction: Copies of Nurse's original plans for this building are filed at the National Archives, Pacific Division, San Bruno, CA. The original ink on linen drawings were not located. Copies of later modifications were also found, although original pencil on vellum drawings of modifications are missing.

6. Alterations/Additions: A wood-frame second story addition was constructed on the south end of the east, or front, facade in 1942 to house the offices of the Air Transport Command. This addition remains in place. Large, single-pane modern windows and modern glass doors have replaced some of the original fixtures; most were added in the late 1950s. Perhaps the most obvious change was the addition of three stories to the original three-story control tower and modification of the lobby. The new addition, constructed in 1957, is metal and glass. At the same time the cooling and

heating systems were replaced and some windows were replaced with aluminum frame windows.

B. Historical Context:

See narrative for Hamilton Field (HABS No. CA-2398).

From its completion in 1934 the base operations building served as the focal point of the air field. Officers, dignitaries, Hollywood stars, delegates to the first United Nations conference, and a president landed at Hamilton and were greeted at this facility. Its role as the hub of the air field continued until base closure in 1974.

Hangar 7 served as the headquarters for the Air Transport Command Pacific Division, established at Hamilton by First Lieutenant Robert A. Ping in January 1942. By the end of 1942 this dispatching unit was staffed by approximately 1,800 officers and enlisted men, and regularly scheduled flights were operating between Hamilton and Australia (Maniery et al. 1993:26).

PART II: ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural Character: Nurse and his team of architects designed reinforced concrete buildings covered with white stucco and red tile roofs and other features such as arcades and ornamental door surrounds in a basic Spanish Colonial Revival style. This style was used by Captain Nurse at Randolph Field in Texas and by other Army architects at various bases (Fine and Remington 1972:48; Thomason and Associates 1993). Captain Nurse blended the standard Colonial Revival design with elements borrowed from Moorish, Spanish Churriguerresque, Mission, and Art Moderne styles, creating a unique Spanish Eclectic look.

Buildings in the industrial area are built of reinforced concrete on concrete piers and foundations; steel bars were used during construction in consideration of the seismic activity of the region. Even though industrial in function, these buildings have design elements consistent with the Spanish Eclectic theme of the base.

Some architectural elements reflect the military function of the base, including the use of the eagle and shield on the NCO barracks, the group headquarters building, and the fireplaces at the officers' club; the caduceus in the brackets supporting the hospital portico; and the Army five-pointed star on the hangars and other buildings.

The base operations building was the focal point of the air field architecture and was also one of the most important administration centers on base.

2. Condition of fabric: Hangar 7 is in good condition; however, the base operations and control tower are dilapidated. The World War II frame buildings have collapsing floors and roofs. The roof of the control tower has also collapsed and the data center that occupied the sixth floor has been damaged by water, roosting birds, and natural elements.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: Hangar No. 7 has a rectangular mass with a connected base operations building. The front elevation of the base operations building features a central projecting three story tower (with a three-story addition) and projecting one-story wings (the southeast wing has a second-story addition). The front elevation of the hangar consists of multiple hangar doors anchored with square concrete pillars beneath a low arched roof with central round metal louvre with stepped parapet roofs. The main building measures 221 feet by 161 feet.

2. Foundation: The foundation is reinforced concrete beams on composite piles. Pile caps are 6 feet long and one foot 10 inches thick. Foundation walls are one foot thick. The hangar floors consist of seven-inch concrete slabs over an eight-inch crushed stone or gravel fill base.

3. Walls: The walls are constructed of 12-inch square hollow tile bricks coated with cementitious stucco rendered with a smooth face. Exterior detailing on the hangar consists of square corner pillars made of concrete 12 inches thick with recessed vertical panels of multi-light windows, circular metal louvers in each end of the hangar roof, and raised lettering originally bracketed with raised cast aluminum stars immediately above the hangar doors stating "HANGAR NO. 7." Detailing on the base operations building is located primarily on the central tower and consists of cast concrete pilasters with recessed vertical panels on each corner and between each window, and cast aluminum panels with an Art Deco eagle motif which are located between the windows on each floor. The new addition to the tower has aluminum siding; the original portion is concrete.

4. Structural systems, framing: Structural support is provided by reinforced concrete columns and a girder system with concrete slab flooring spanning between concrete joists. Sidewall bracing is provided by riveted steel girders. Infill material is poured-in-place reinforced concrete. The hangar roof is a low arched riveted steel truss system with a wood built-up roof on top of the trusses.

5. Porches, stoops, balconies, bulkheads: Entry into the base operations is by concrete walkway and stoop.

6. Chimneys: Metal ventilators are located on the roofs and are described under ventilation.

7. Openings:

a. Doorways/doors: The primary entrance doors, which access the northeast elevation of the central tower, are replacements of the originals. They are steel, with four lights of security glass above a recessed panel. The hangar doors, located on each side of the building, are unlike those in the other hangars; instead of sliding on tracks like the Morgan Hangar Doors, these fold in half along a single horizontal panel that is supported by cables operated by pulleys mounted on the interior roof supports. A covered hatch provides access to the control tower roof from the main control room.

b. Windows/shutters: Original windows in the control tower were multi-light industrial sash; the front windows have been replaced with plate glass with one large pane. Fenestration on the side elevations of the hangar consist of continuous sets of 15-light metal industrial sash windows. There is a double row of window sets on the southwest elevation and a single row on the northeast. Window sash on the wings consists of 25- or 30-light industrial metal sash; the three central lights in the center form an operable awning window. Window glass is of the security type, with frosted glass embedded with wire mesh. The windows sash in the recessed panels of the corner pillars is operated with a chain and pulley system. These pillars have two sets of square windows, each with 10 lights, arranged vertically. The middle four lights are awning windows. The area of the recessed panel between the two sets is concrete.

8. Roof:

a. Shape/covering: The hangar roof consists of a broad, low arch truss system covered with composition paper and aluminum coping. The roofs on the original tower and base operations building are flat. The base operations roof is covered with composition paper and the tower has a four-ply asphalt and gravel roof. This roof is hexagonal. With the exception of the World War II period, the hangar roof has traditionally been painted in a large black and white check pattern. It was camouflaged during the war.

b. Cornice/eaves: The gutter system consists of copper troughs leading to scuppers with an Art Deco design. Metal downspouts have cast concrete splash guards. The cornice on the hangars and wings is metal.

c. Dormers, cupolas, towers: A concrete control tower, originally three stories high and square, is located on the central front mass of the northeast elevation, facing the runway. A three-story addition, consisting of a square room with a hexagonal tower surrounded by a walkway with a one and one-quarter-inch standpipe railing, was constructed on top of the original tower in 1965. A "VFR" control room was added in 1965; it is hexagonal and constructed of glass and metal.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor Plans:

a. First Floor: The main entrance foyer of the base operations building provides access to a central vestibule, flanked by a baggage room, check room, and two lounges on the northeast, a "transportation" room and restroom to the rear, and a corridor with a stairway to the second story. Rooms in the first floor wings lounge area, locker room, toilet, and shower room (1957 modification), weather briefing room and offices. A computer center and telephone circuit board remains in one of the offices. The hangar is a large open area, and adjoins the base operations portion of the building on its southwest side.

b. Second Floor: The second floor of the southwest corner addition on the building served as the original Air Transport Command headquarters and consists of a series of offices and a latrine. The second floor of the tower is open and consists of two rooms that once served as offices and a latrine.

c. Third Floor: This square room is in the tower and is open space probably used as an office.

d. Fourth Floor: The fourth floor is square and contains large (24-inch by 11-inch) ducts and electrical equipment.

e. Fifth Floor: The fifth floor is hexagonal shaped and has five dampers, a control panel, and supply ducts and massive heating and exhaust equipment.

f. Sixth Floor: The top of the tower is a six-sided data control room. The three sides facing the air field have built-in countertops and places where radar equipment once was located. There are work spaces on two of the remaining walls. A water cooler is also located here. The roof is accessed by a metal rung ladder.

2. Stairways: The primary stair, located in the base operations building, is concrete covered with aggregate; it has a metal edge plate covering the top portion of the riser and the tread. Ornamental polychrome tiles are inlaid in the risers. The balustrade is Art

Deco in design, with square wrought iron balusters, a wrought iron newel post in a geometric design, and an oak handrail. The base of the stairway is decorated with recessed panels. A smaller rear stairway has a wood balustrade with square caps and is of two by four inch construction. Wooden stairways and metal fire ladders are located in each corner pillar and provide access to the hangar repair platform. The control tower is reached by a metal circular staircase.

3. Flooring: Subflooring for the entire building is seven-inch thick concrete slab, smooth finished on a gravel base. The floor in the base operations portion of the building is covered with eight-inch square vinyl asphalt tile, in shades of gray and green. The hangar floor is finished concrete, with expansion joints between the six sections.

4. Wall/ceiling finish: The walls and ceilings in the foyer, corridors, stair wells, and individual rooms in the building are covered with plaster over wire mesh. The walls are painted; varying shades and levels of green, gray, and peach were observed. The baseboard has been painted brown. The walls and ceilings in some of the rooms have been covered with modern acoustical tile or plywood. The hangar ceiling is open to the metal truss roof. Hangar walls are smooth finish stucco-clad tile bricks painted white above gray paint wainscoting; dangerous areas are painted red.

5. Openings:

a. Doorways/doors: Doors in the base operations building are steel with four glass lights over a recessed panel, or solid-core wood with four-lights over three panels. Replacement doors are solid-core wood with five horizontal recessed panels.

b. Windows: Natural light in the hangars is provided by exterior windows.

6. Decorative features/trim: The only significant decorative trim noted was on the stairway and is described in No. 2. above.

7. Hardware: Hardware on the primary entrance doors consists of a "Reading" lock set and handles. Interior doors have standard lock sets with circular metal knobs and half-mortise hinges. The original etched brass switch plates are extant in most areas of the building.

8. Mechanical equipment:

a. Heating, air conditioning, ventilation: Original heating was a gas-fired cast iron "Ideal" boiler. Steam radiators are located in original offices and rooms and were made by the American Radiator Company. A circulating heater and cooling system was installed in 1957.

b. Ventilation: Ventilation for the hangar is through metal ventilators located on the roof. Three capped 36-inch vents are on the hangar roof. Circular louvers over main hangar doors are metal, made of three-foot nine-inch long rods and have screens behind the rods. Small pipe ventilators are on the frame addition roofs.

c. Lighting: Original lighting fixtures were of the "schoolhouse" type, with a large milk glass bowl shade suspended from a canopy and chain. Replacement fixtures include suspended two-tube florescent "Brite Slimline" lights. Original lighting fixtures in the hangars have a metal canopy and are suspended on a pole from the ceiling. Replacement fixtures include search lights and red signal lights mounted on a pole and located on the corner towers and top of the hangar roof arch. In addition, gimballed flood lights, original to the building, are located on the northeast elevation of the hangar.

d. Plumbing: Fixtures in the tower lavatory consist of modern sink and flush-valve toilet and a circular shower. The lobby bathroom also has modern flush-valve toilets (2), sinks (2), and a wall-mounted urinal.

e. Miscellaneous: Counter-weight and pulley systems are located in the corner towers of the hangar and operate the hangar doors. Monorail systems, operated by a cable and pulley system, are located on each side of the hangar and operate a moveable personnel platform. A VFR system is located on the top story of the tower. A "Seasonpac McQuay Compressor" is located at the top of the tower.

9. Original Furnishings: No original furnishings were noted.

D. Site:

1. General site orientation: The primary facade of the Base Operations building faces northeast, towards the flight field. It is located in the original Spanish Colonial Revival district of Hamilton Army Airfield, on a flat site surrounded by rolling hills, and aligned in a row with the other hangar facilities (Buildings 350, 370, 380, and 390) immediately adjacent to the air field.

2. Historic landscape design: As originally designed, the Base Operations building was flanked by lawns on its northeast and southwest elevations; most of the lawn area has now been covered with asphalt. The control tower received special attention during landscaping efforts. Additional plantings appear to have been made with an attempt to integrate the entrance into the general landscaping theme of the base. The presence of Canary Island data palms at the entrance of the base operations building reflect the palm-lined streets throughout the base. Species observed along the foundation include red escallonia, shiny-leaf privet, Japanese privet, juniper cultivar, and Hollywood juniper. Benches, an announcement board, and a painted concrete walkway (the "red carpet" entry) complete the transition from the air field to the entrance.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Architectural Drawings:

See narrative for Hamilton Field (HABS No. CA-2398). Copies of the original plans for Facility No. 365, and improvements, are on file at the National Archives, Pacific Division, San Bruno, and at the Novato History Museum, Novato, CA.

B. Historic Maps and Views:

See narrative for Hamilton Field (HA8S No. CA-2398). Historical photographs of the control tower are on file at the Novato History Museum, Novato, CA.

C. Interviews:

See narrative for Hamilton Field (HABS No. CA-2398).

D. Bibliography:

See narrative for Hamilton Field (HABS No. CA-2398).

Sources cited in this individual report are listed below.

Fine, Jesse, and Lenore Remington
1972 *Army Corps of Engineers: Construction in the U.S.* U.S. Army and World War II, Office of Military History.

Hamilton Facility Cards
1933-1971 Maintenance Cards for Base Facilities. On file, Hamilton Army Air Field Installation Office, Novato, and Hamilton Room, Novato History Museum, Novato.

Maniery, Mary L., Leslie R. Fryman, and Fred Hrusa
1993 *National Register of Historic Places Evaluation, Hamilton Army Air Field Historic District, Marin County, California*. Submitted to U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Sacramento District.

Thomason and Associates
1993 *Randolph Air Force Base, San Antonio, Texas*. Cultural Resource Survey, Final Report. Nashville, Tennessee. On file, State Office of Historic Preservation, Austin, Texas.

E. Likely Sources Not Yet Investigated:

See narrative for Hamilton Field (HABS No. CA-2398).

F. Supplemental Material:

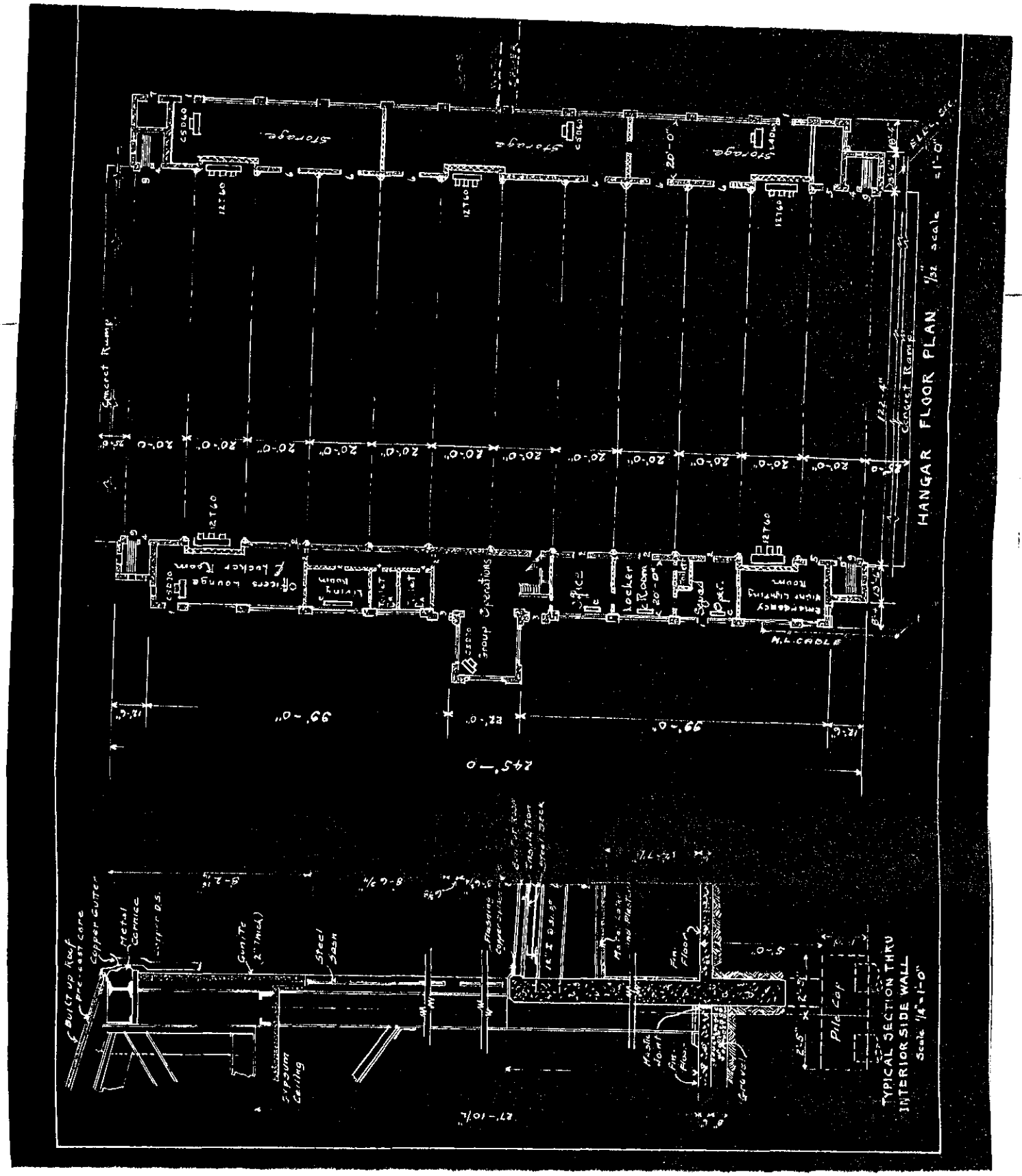
See also the project Field Record, roll 73, exposures 9-11; roll 74, exposures 1-6; and roll 75, exposures 1-2. Copies of representative floor plans of Base Operations, dated 1935 and prepared by Quartermaster General office, are attached to this form.

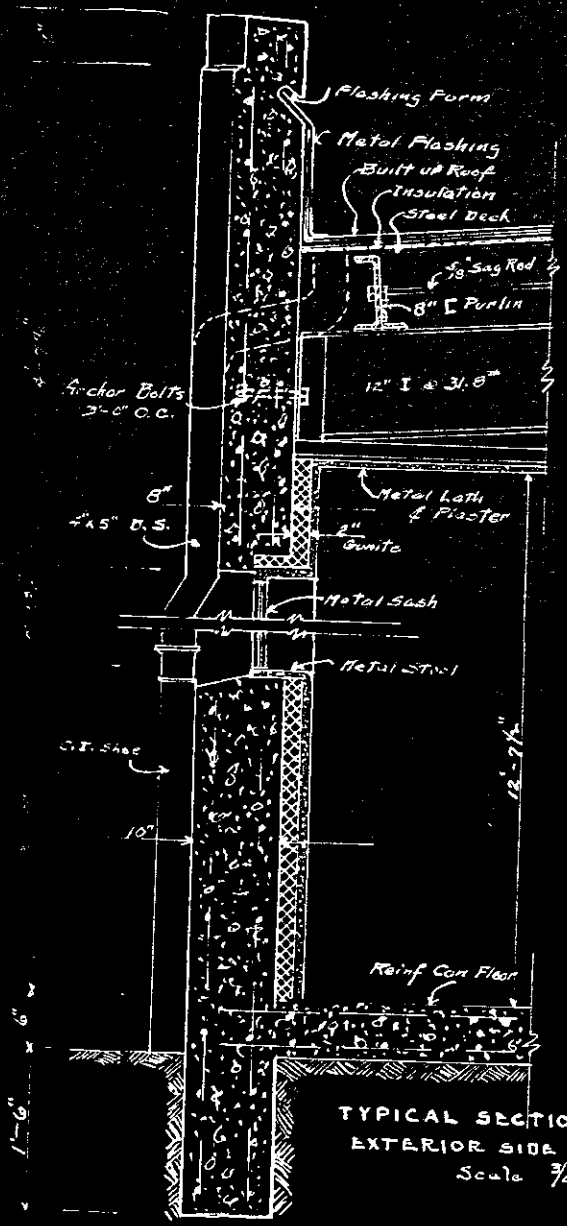
PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

Hamilton Army Air Field is owned by various federal entities including the Department of the Navy, Department of the Army, United States Coast Guard, and General Services Administration. The Army/GSA parcels are being excessed and sold to private developers. The Navy property is included in Base Closure and Realignment Actions.

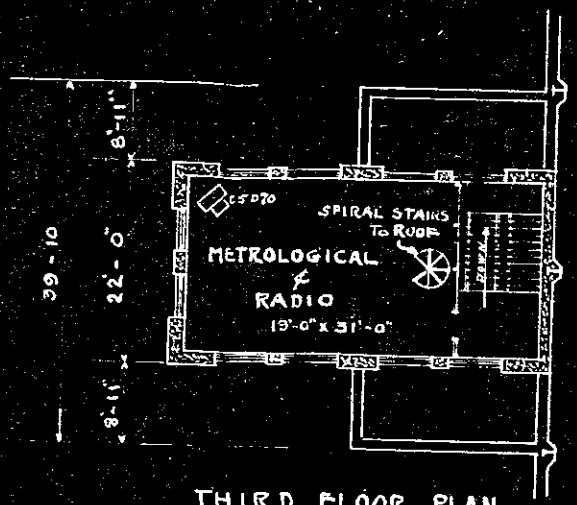
As part of the Army's undertaking, it has been determined in consultation with the California Office of Historic Preservation (OHP) that the excess sale will have an affect on properties at the airfield, and that these properties are components of a district that is eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places. Based on consultation with the OHP and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, pursuant to 36 CFR part 800, regulations implementing Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (16 U.S.C. 470f), a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) was entered into by the interested parties in March 1994. The agreement stipulated that prior to excess sale the Army must contact the HABS/HAER division at the Western Regional Office of the National Park Service, San Francisco, California, to determine the appropriate level and kind of recordation for the subject properties. The MOA further stipulated that copies of the documentation be made available to the OHP and appropriate local archives designated by the OHP. This recordation has been prepared in order to meet those stipulations.

The title page, Part I, and Part III were prepared by Mary L. Maniery, Historian, PAR Environmental Services, Sacramento. Architectural descriptions in Part II were compiled by Judith Marvin, Historian/Architectural Historian, Foothill Resources, Murphys, California. Descriptions were checked against photographs and plans by Mary L. Maniery and were embellished and corrected, as necessary. Information on historic landscape design was extracted by Mary L. Maniery from a report prepared by Dr. Fred Hrusa, Botanist, PAR Environmental Services. Photography was prepared by David DeVries, Mesa Technical, Berkeley, California.

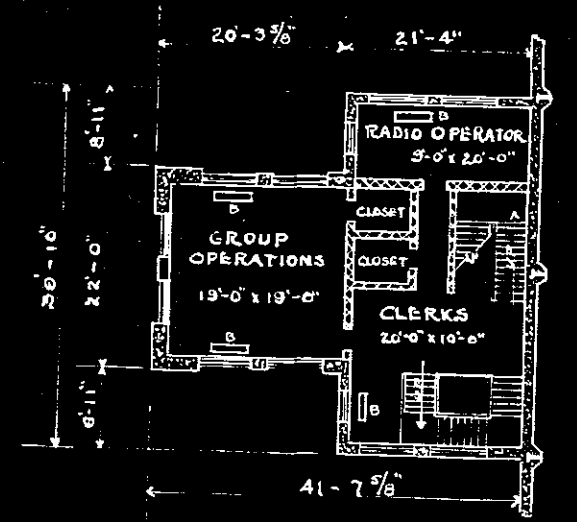

HANGAR FLOOR PLAN
TYPICAL SECTION THRU INTERIOR SIDE WALL
Storage
Group Operations
Locker Room
Officers Lounge & Locker Room
Concrete Ramp
Metal Cornice
Gunite
Steel Sash
Gravel
Pile Cap



TYPICAL SECTION THRU EXTERIOR SIDE WALL
Scale ¾" = 1'-0"



THIRD FLOOR PLAN
Scale ⅛" = 1'-0"



SECOND FLOOR PLAN
Scale ⅛" = 1'-0"

DOOR OPENINGS

MK	SIZE	REMARKS
1	2'-6" x 8'-0"	Dble. Steel Glass Top
2	3'-0" x 7'-0"	Steel Glass Top
3	3'-6" x 8'-0"	" " "
4	3'-0" x 7'-0"	Steel
5	2'-6" x 7'-0"	Dble. Steel Glass Top
6	2'-0" x 7'-0"	" " "
7	2'-6" x 6'-6"	Steel
8	2'-6" x 7'-0"	"
9	12'-0" x 26'-0"	Hangar Doors

GAS FIRED UNIT HEATERS

MK	Type	BTUH OUTPUT CAPACITY PER HR.	C.F.M.	ENTERING AIR TEMPERATURE
UT 60	Floor	250,000	7500	60° F
C5 D60	Ceiling	50,000	750	"
C5 D60	"	40,000	750	"
C5 D70	"	50,000	750	70° F

GAS-STEAM RADIATORS.

MK.	SIZE	# HWR.
A	26" High	38
B	26" "	64
C	26" "	86

WAR DEPARTMENT
OFFICE CONSTRUCTING QUARTERMASTER
HAMILTON FIELD, CALIF.

OPERATIONS HANGAR

Drawn by EPR
Traced EPR
Checked ESUG
Date 12/9/35

LEANDER LARSON
Capt. Q.M.C.
Const. Quartermaster

OGMG Plan 6754-220 To 6754-238 inc
Foot Plan 373-39-35
File No. 53